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## SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE

Tenth meeting

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Item 5.1 of the provisional agenda\*

### SCIENTIFIC ASSESSMENTS

#### *Review of methods and modalities for assessments, and pilot assessments initiated by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice*

*Note by the Executive Secretary*

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to paragraph 26 of decision V/20 of the Conference of the Parties (COP), the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) decided, in recommendation VI/5, to initiate some pilot assessments (on the status and trends of forest biological diversity; socio-economic and ecological impacts of invasive alien species on island and on inland water ecosystems; interlinkages between biological diversity and climate change; and development of rapid assessment methods for the biodiversity of inland water ecosystems and for marine and coastal biological diversity) in order to advance knowledge on current priority issues, and to test a range of methods and modalities for undertaking future assessments.

The pilot assessments provided the background information needed for the development of the programme of work on forest biodiversity, and work on the interlinkages between biodiversity, land degradation and climate change. The results of the latter pilot assessment are also being considered in the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The information on impacts of invasive alien species will be used in the development of the programme of work on island biodiversity and in the programme of work on inland water ecosystems. The rapid assessment methods were compiled and are shared with the Ramsar Convention and could be used for identification and inventorying of ecosystems important for conservation.

The steps followed in carrying out the assessments are summarized in annex I to this note and could be used in a flexible manner for future assessments. The note highlights the need for SBSTTA to decide on future assessments and ways for considering its assessments before submitting them to the Conference of the Parties, whether for noting or endorsing. The note also outlines options for the Convention to participate in assessments initiated by other bodies and for strengthening the national capacity for undertaking assessments by developing countries.

\* UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/10/1.

### SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS

The Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice may wish to recommend that the Conference of the Parties:

- (a) *Endorses* the flexible process for carrying out scientific assessments as contained in the annex to this document;
- (b) *Invites* Parties and other Governments to make use of the findings and conclusions of scientific assessments carried out, and assessment methods developed within the framework of the Convention, in particular in the context of their work to achieve the 2010 biodiversity target;
- (c) *Notes* the list of assessments that the Subsidiary Body could undertake up to 2010, contained in section III-A of the present note, as part of the in-depth review of the programmes of work to be carried out in accordance with the multi-year programme of work of the Convention;
- (d) *Encourages* Parties and other Governments to provide expertise and financial support to SBSTTA assessments and *invites* relevant organizations, professional societies and initiatives to participate in such assessments by contributing relevant information and data and by assisting Parties and other Governments at the national or regional level on data collection;
- (e) *Invites* Parties, other Governments and relevant conventions and organizations, when carrying out assessments relevant to the thematic areas and cross-cutting issues considered by the Convention, to encourage the participation of representatives of the Convention and the preparation of a specific biodiversity synthesis report for consideration by SBSTTA.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. In paragraph 26 of decision V/20, the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) to continue to improve the way it conducts its scientific, technical and technological work in order to enhance the quality of its advice to the Conference of the Parties. The Conference of the Parties further requested SBSTTA to *inter alia*:

(a) Identify and, where needed, further develop, procedures and methods to: (i) undertake or participate in scientific assessments, or (ii) make use of existing ones, taking into account considerations of participation, effectiveness and costs;

(b) Undertake a limited number of pilot scientific assessment projects;

(c) Develop further its methodologies for scientific assessment, and provide advice to Parties on scientific assessment design and implementation; and

(d) Identify and regularly update, within the context of its programme of work, assessment priorities and information needs.

2. In recommendation VI/5, SBSTTA provided guidance regarding the request from the Conference of the Parties in paragraph 1 (c) above, taking into account the recommendations of the brainstorming meeting held in Oslo (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/6/9/Add.1), on the procedures for initiating, preparing, carrying out, using and reporting on, scientific assessments and listed criteria (recommendation VI/5, paragraph 1) and approaches to be considered. The Subsidiary Body also emphasized the importance for scientific assessments to contribute to capacity-building and enhancement of institutions and promote scientific cooperation, education and public awareness.

3. In the same recommendation, SBSTTA decided to:

(a) Test a range of methods and modalities for assessments and to advance assessment on the following priority issues: (i) status and trends of forest biological diversity; (ii) impacts of invasive alien species; and (iii) interlinkages between biological diversity and climate change;

(b) Develop rapid assessment methods for: (i) the biodiversity of inland water ecosystems; and (ii) marine and coastal biological diversity.

4. In response to the request of SBSTTA, the Executive Secretary made the necessary arrangements for the pilot assessments and development of rapid assessment methods. Regarding invasive alien species, the Executive Secretary decided to start, as a matter of priority, with the assessment of the socio-economic and environmental impacts on island biodiversity and inland water ecosystems.

5. Section II of the present note summarizes the processes followed in carrying out the pilot assessments and in developing the rapid assessment methods. In section III, conclusions are drawn for the modalities to conduct assessments in the future.

## II. PROCESSES FOLLOWED FOR THE PILOT ASSESSMENTS AND DEVELOPMENT OF RAPID ASSESSMENT METHODS

6. While the detailed stages in each pilot assessment may have differed, the assessments typically followed a number of steps including:

(a) Recognition of the need to carry out an assessment/mandate;

(b) Preparation of background document(s) or a note by the Executive Secretary;

(c) Consideration by an ad hoc technical expert group (AHTEG) or review by a group of experts;

(d) Wider peer-review;

- (e) Consideration by SBSTTA;
- (f) Use and application of results and identification of further gaps.

7. The following paragraphs describe the key steps for each of the pilot assessments and development of rapid assessment methods. Table 1 summarizes these steps, including information on the costs of AHTEG meetings.

#### ***A. Status and trends of forest biological diversity***

##### *1. Mandate*

8. The Conference of the Parties, in paragraph 12 of decision IV/7, requested SBSTTA to provide advice on the status and trends of forest biological diversity and the identification of options for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. In addition, the work programme on forest biological diversity as contained in the annex to that decision, includes several identified activities related to assessment such as a comprehensive analysis of the ways in which human activities influence forest biological diversity. In decision V/4, on progress report on the implementation of the programme of work for forest biological diversity, the Conference of the Parties also identified several other priority issues that may need specific assessments such as impact of human-induced uncontrolled forest fires, harvesting of non-timber forest resources, and climate change on forest biological diversity.

9. To assist SBSTTA in its work on forest biological diversity, the Conference of the Parties, in paragraph 4 of its decision V/4 established an Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Forest Biological Diversity.

##### *2. Preparation of a background document*

10. To facilitate the work of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group, the Executive Secretary prepared a draft background document, in collaboration with the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for the section on forest genetic resources. The chapter on values of forest biodiversity was drafted with the assistance of a consultant.

##### *3. Consideration by the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group*

11. The AHTEG met in Montreal, from 27 November to 1 December 2000, with financial support from the Government of Canada, and in Edinburgh from 23 to 27 April 2001, and organized one meeting of only a few members in the inter-sessional period, with financial support from the Government of the United Kingdom. The Group considered the draft background document prepared by the Secretariat. Membership of the group represented a wide range of expertise related to various aspects of forest biological diversity, including Government-nominated experts in forest biodiversity from all the United Nations regions and representatives of intergovernmental, non-governmental organizations and the SBSTTA Bureau, and, for the Edinburgh meeting, a facilitator.

12. At the Montreal meeting, the Group made progress in implementing its mandate but needed intersessional work and a second meeting considering the range of themes/issues that needed to be addressed. The outcome of the second meeting of the AHTEG required additional refinement by a 'writing committee' which met at the offices of the Convention on Biological Diversity, in Montreal, in June. This committee continued to finalize the documents by electronic correspondence and with commentary from the rest of the Expert group during June and July, 2001.

##### *4. Wider peer-review*

13. The draft of this report was reviewed externally, first through a review by a few selected reviewers. It was posted afterward on the website of the Convention for comments by the scientific community at large. As a result of the work of the AHTEG and the peer review process, three documents were produced:

(a) The Report of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/7/6) which contains, *inter alia*, a summary of the review of the status and trends of, and threats to, forest biological diversity, and options and priority actions for a programme of work;

(b) The status and trends of, and major threats to, forest biological diversity which addresses the following issues: status of forest biological diversity; forest ecosystems functioning and related goods and services; major threats to forest biological diversity; and trends of forest biological diversity (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/7/INF/3);

(c) The set of matrices used in defining options and priority actions for conservation and sustainable use of forest biological diversity (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/7/INF/4).

#### 5. *Consideration by SBSTTA*

14. The Subsidiary Body considered the report of the AHTEG (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/7/6) and welcomed it. In recommendation VII/6, SBSTTA recommended that the Conference of the Parties welcomed the AHTEG report, and took note of the assessment of status and trends and major threats to forest biological diversity contained in the report, and adopts an expanded programme of work on forest biological diversity.

#### 6. *Use and application of the results and identification of future gaps*

15. In decision VI/22 the Conference of the Parties welcomed the report of the AHTEG on Forest Biological Diversity, and took note of the assessment of status and trends of, and major threats to, forest biological diversity contained in the report, and adopted the expanded programme of work on forest biological diversity based on the AHTEG report

16. The substantive part of the report of the AHTEG on status and trends of, and threats to, forest biodiversity and the section of the report on the value of forest biodiversity have been published in the CBD Technical Series as No. 7 and No. 4, respectively. Technical Series No. 7 (status & trends) has been reprinted to respond to the high demand.

### **B. *Ecological and socio-economic impacts of invasive alien species on island ecosystems***

#### 1. *Recognition of the need to carry out an assessment/mandate*

17. In March 2001, the sixth meeting of SBSTTA, in paragraphs 1 and 9 of recommendation VI/5, decided to initiate, in accordance with decision V/20 (para. 29 (b)) of the Conference of the Parties, a number of pilot assessments on current priority issues, including *inter alia* on the impacts of invasive alien species.

18. Additional guidance was provided in paragraph 24 of decision VI/23 <sup>1/</sup> in which the Conference of the Parties urged Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to promote and carry out assessments on, *inter alia*, the impact of alien species on biological diversity and the socio-economic implications of invasive alien species particularly the implications for indigenous and local communities. In the same decision, the Conference of the Parties recognized that invasive alien species represent one of the primary threats to biodiversity, especially in geographically and evolutionary isolated ecosystems, such as small island developing States (preamble to Section II on the Guiding Principles). In the project briefs prepared for the seventh meeting of SBSTTA (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/7/3 and /Add.1), the Executive Secretary, bearing in mind the importance of invasive alien species in island ecosystems and in other thematic areas, in particular inland water ecosystems and marine areas, decided to start with two studies (on the impacts on island biodiversity and on inland water ecosystems), in accordance with funds available at the time. The focus on island biodiversity is based on the recognition of the vulnerability of

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<sup>1/</sup> One representative entered a formal objection during the process leading to the adoption of this decision and underlined that he did not believe that the Conference of the Parties could legitimately adopt a motion or a text with a formal objection in place. A few representatives expressed reservations regarding the procedure leading to the adoption of this decision (see UNEP/CBD/COP/6/20, paras. 294-324). This footnote applies to all mentions of decision VI/23 throughout this document.

island ecosystems to alien invasions and the request to pay particular attention to small islands contained in the project brief on the pilot assessments in the progress report on ongoing assessment processes.

## *2. Preparation of background document*

19. In response to the provisions of this decision and SBSTTA recommendation VI/5, the Executive Secretary commissioned the Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP) in 2001, to work with Parties and other bodies to assemble case-studies on the ecological, social and economic impact of invasive alien species with particular attention to small islands. The project brief provided by the Secretariat is contained in the progress report on ongoing assessment processes (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/7/3).

20. The GISP convened on 18 and 19 October 2002, with additional financial support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), an Expert Consultation on the Ecological and Socioeconomic Impacts of Invasive Alien Species on Island Ecosystems in Honolulu, Hawaii, to review the socio-economic and biological impacts of invasive alien species on island systems. Seventeen experts from 10 countries, as well as GISP, the World Conservation Union (IUCN), and the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) with collective expertise in island systems around the world participated in the consultation. The full report of the consultation is available on the website of the Convention at <http://www.biodiv.org/doc/ref/ais-gisp-report-en.doc> (edited by Jamie K. Reaser and Laura Meyerson).

## *3. First peer-review*

21. The assessment part of the report prepared by GISP was subjected to peer-review and the reviewers' comments have been incorporated as appropriate in the pilot assessments on the ecological and socio-economic impact of invasive alien species on island ecosystems (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/9/INF/33).

## *4. Consideration by SBSTTA*

22. The revised report integrating comments from reviewers was presented to SBSTTA at its ninth meeting, in November 2003, as document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/9/INF/33 for information.

## *5. Wider peer-review*

23. In September 2004 the Executive Secretary invited a second round of reviews, including in particular all SBSTTA focal points and experts on invasive alien species from the roster of experts of the Convention on Biological Diversity. It is planned that the revised document will be published in the CBD Technical Series.

## *6. Use and application of results and identification of further gaps*

24. Elements from the assessment report were integrated in the document on the status and trend of, and threats to island biodiversity (UNEP/CBD/AHTEG-IB/1/3) prepared for the AHTEG on island biodiversity. The latter document has been referenced a number of times in the report of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment on island systems.

# ***C. Ecological and socio-economic impact of invasive alien species on inland waters***

## *1. Recognition of the need to carry out an assessment/mandate*

25. The assessment of the ecological and socio-economic impact of invasive alien species on inland waters was also initiated in paragraph 6 (d) of SBSTTA recommendation VI/5. The choice of inland water ecosystems was made by the Executive Secretary (see paragraph 4 above). The focus on inland water ecosystems is in accordance with paragraph 8 (c) (vi), of annex I to decision IV/4 in which the Conference of the Parties requested SBSTTA to compile case-studies on examples of the impacts of invasive alien species and of programmes used to control their introduction and mitigate negative consequences on inland water ecosystems especially at the watershed, catchment and river-basin level.

## 2. *Preparation of the background document*

26. The Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP) was contracted in 2001 to lead this assessment and to work with Parties and other bodies to provide an international perspective on the issue. While the GISP was undergoing restructuring, arrangements were made to sub-contract The Nature Conservancy. This assessment was supported by a team of technical and policy experts who attended an expert consultation hosted by GISP and The Nature Conservancy in Washington D.C. in July 2003.

## 3. *Review by a group of experts and wider peer-review*

27. The assessment report was subjected to a peer review by selected experts during July 2004. The revised assessment report was submitted to a second round of open review, including those in the roster of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and national focal points, during October 2004.

## 4. *Consideration by SBSTTA*

28. The revised report integrating comments from reviewers is being prepared for submission to the tenth meeting of SBSTTA as an information document. It is also planned to publish it in the CBD Technical Series.

### **D. *Interlinkages between biological diversity and climate change***

#### *1. Recognition of the need to carry out the assessment/mandate*

29. At its fifth meeting, in 2000, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity made reference to the interactions between climate change and the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in a number of thematic and cross-cutting areas, including marine and coastal biodiversity (decision V/3), forest biodiversity (decision V/4), and incentive measures (decision V/15), and urged strengthened cooperation with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on these matters and in the thematic area of the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands (decision V/21).

30. The Conference of the Parties specifically requested SBSTTA to consider the impact of climate change on forest biological diversity and to prepare scientific advice in order to integrate biodiversity considerations into the implementation of the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol (decision V/4, paras. 11 and 16-20). The Conference of the Parties called for this work to be carried out in collaboration with the appropriate bodies of the UNFCCC and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). In particular, the IPCC was invited to contribute to the assessment process by preparing, *inter alia*, a technical paper on climate change and biodiversity. The Bureau of IPCC authorized the release of the report on climate change and biodiversity (Technical Paper V on Climate Change and Biodiversity) in 2002.

#### *2. Note by the Executive Secretary*

31. The Executive Secretary, in collaboration with IPCC drafted an outline of the document on interlinkages between biodiversity and climate change.

#### *3. Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group*

32. In response to decision V/4, SBSTTA decided to undertake a wider assessment of the interlinkages between biological diversity and climate change. To this end, in paragraph 1 of its recommendation VI/7, SBSTTA established an AHTEG on Biological Diversity and Climate Change, provided guidance to the Group and invited the UNFCCC, the Convention on Migratory Species, the Ramsar Convention, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel of the Global Environment Facility, the United Nations Forum on Forests and other relevant organizations to contribute to this work.

33. The AHTEG comprised experts in the fields of biological diversity and climate change from all the United Nations regions, nominated by Governments among experts from the Convention on Biological Diversity and UNFCCC, as well as experts from non-governmental organizations, indigenous and local communities, including the secretariats of the IPCC and the UNFCCC. The group met three times: first in Helsinki from 21 to 25 January 2002; then in Montreal from 9 to 13 September 2002, and finally again in Helsinki from 13 to 16 May 2003. A small-group inter-sessional meeting was held among lead report authors in Washington D.C. in January 2003 to complete the report before the final revision by the whole group in May 2003. Inter-sessionally, the members of the group contributed very actively. During all these meetings the group reviewed relevant literature, including but not limited to, the IPCC Third Assessment Review, the IPCC Technical Paper on Climate Change and Biodiversity, and the Special Report on Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF). All these meetings were funded by the Government of Finland

#### 4. *Peer review*

34. Between February and May 2003 a draft report was posted on the website of the Convention on Biological Diversity and circulated for peer-review by Parties, other Governments, non-governmental organizations, and the scientific community at large. The views and comments derived from the review process were considered at the third meeting of the Expert Group. Additional inputs were received during a side-event that was held at the eighteen session of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice in June 2003.

#### 5. *Consideration by SBSTTA*

35. The final report (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/9/11 and UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/9/INF/12) was submitted to the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice and to SBSTTA. At its ninth meeting, the Subsidiary Body of the Convention on Biological Diversity welcomed the report and commended it to the Conference of the Parties as scientific advice and as a basis for future work.

#### 6. *Use and Application of results and identification of further gaps*

36. At its seventh meeting, in 2004, the Conference of the Parties welcomed the report as scientific advice and invited Parties, other Governments, international organizations and other bodies to make use of it in order to promote synergies at the national level between the UNFCCC and the Convention on Biological Diversity. The final report submitted to SBSTTA was also published as CBD Technical Series No. 10. Since February 2004 the report of the AHTEG has served as source material to chapter no. 13 of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment responses assessment (responses to climate change), and to the research reports no. 200 41 204 and 202 85 275 of the Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety of the Government of Germany, which deal with integrating biodiversity into climate-change activities. In addition, it provided input to the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in its work on exploiting the interlinkages between the focal areas of the GEF.

37. There are plans to establish another AHTEG to further the work of the previous AHTEG on adaptation, and to translate its findings, into concrete guidance for developing activities aimed at mitigating and adapting to climate change also taking into account the interlinkages between biodiversity and land degradation.

### ***E. Rapid assessment methods for the biodiversity of inland water ecosystems***

#### *1. Recognition of the need to carry out an assessment/mandate*

38. In paragraph 8 (b) of the programme of work on the biological diversity of inland water ecosystems (decision IV/4, annex I), the Conference of the Parties requested SBSTTA to develop a work plan on inland water ecosystems which should include, *inter alia*, the development and dissemination of regional guidelines for rapid assessment of inland water biological diversity for different types of inland

water ecosystems. In paragraphs 6 and 7 of the programme of work, the Conference of the Parties requested that in the development of rapid-assessment methodologies special attention be paid to early cooperation with the small island States and the territories of certain States in which inland water ecosystems suffer from ecological disaster.

39. By paragraphs 10 (a) and (c) of the third joint work plan (2002-2006) of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention on Wetlands, (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) (UNEP/CBD/COP/6/INF/14), the secretariats of the two conventions agreed to jointly develop technical guidelines on the rapid assessment of biological diversity of inland water ecosystems for consideration and adoption by both conventions and to seek to ensure that the technical guidance and tools available from the other convention are used, where appropriate, to implement their programmes of work and to meet the needs of their Parties, particularly through the provision of harmonized guidance.

#### *2. Note by the Executive Secretary*

40. To facilitate the development of the guidelines, the Executive Secretary commissioned Conservation International to compile information on methods for the rapid assessment of inland water biological diversity and guidelines for their application. Following peer-review and revision, a draft (UNEP/CBD/EM-RAIW/1/2) on methods for the rapid assessment of inland water biological diversity and guidelines for their application was prepared as background document for an expert meeting.

#### *3. Consideration by a group of experts*

41. The Executive Secretary then convened, in collaboration with the Ramsar Secretariat, an expert meeting to further develop these guidelines. The meeting was held in Montreal from 2 to 4 December 2002 with participants selected among experts nominated by the national focal points to the Ramsar Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity, taking into account a geographical/regional and gender balance. Relevant United Nations and other international organizations were also represented. A resource person from Conservation International assisted the Secretariat.

#### *4. Consideration by SBSTTA*

42. The procedural details and substantive report of the expert meeting on methods and guidelines for the rapid assessment of biological diversity of inland water ecosystems were presented to SBSTTA at its eighth meeting (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/8/8/Add.5) and (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/8/INF/5). The Subsidiary Body recommended that the Conference of the Parties welcomed the report and invited Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to use and promote the application of the guidelines.

#### *5. Use and application of the results and identification of further gaps*

43. The Conference of the Parties welcomed the report of the Expert Meeting on Guidelines on Rapid Assessment of Biological Diversity of Inland Water Ecosystems (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/8/INF/5) and the guidelines annexed thereto. It also recognized the usefulness of these guidelines to create baseline or reference data sets for inland water ecosystems of different types and to address the serious gaps that exist in knowledge of taxonomy, distribution, and conservation status of freshwater species.

44. It is envisaged that this document will be published in the CBD Technical Series. The Secretariat is also in contact with relevant organizations interested in the provision of training on these methodologies and the development of more specific regional guidelines.

45. As noted in the report of the expert meeting (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/8/8/Add.5), the tools presented in the guidelines focus on the assessment of biological diversity at the species level. However, reference is made to tools that will assist in the assessment of ecosystems, and a case-study provides an example of assessing habitat as a surrogate for biological diversity. In addition, the guidelines do not address the full range of socio-economic or cultural values of the biological diversity of inland water ecosystems. Further elaboration of the guidelines to address ecosystem scale assessments and assessments of socio-economic and cultural components of biological diversity is recommended.

46. The Subsidiary Body recommended also that the Executive Secretary develops a monitoring and reporting system to assess the experiences gathered with respect to the usefulness and applicability of the guidelines.

47. Small island developing States requested support to enable them to build capacity on the rapid assessment of the biological diversity of inland water ecosystems and in assessing threats to biodiversity from invasive alien species and provide guidance on the implementation of mitigation measures.

## ***F. Rapid assessment methods for marine and coastal biological diversity***

### *1. Mandate*

48. In paragraph 29 (a) of its decision V/20, the Conference of the Parties requested SBSTTA to identify, and where needed, further develop procedures and methods to undertake or participate in scientific assessments, or make use of existing ones. In response to this, SBSTTA, at its sixth meeting adopted recommendation VI/5, on the development of methodologies and identification of pilot studies for scientific assessments, including those relating to marine and coastal biological diversity.

### *2. Note by the Executive Secretary*

49. In response to recommendation VI/5, paragraph 6 (c), the Executive Secretary prepared, for the consideration of SBSTTA at its seventh meeting, a project brief concerning the development of rapid assessment methods for marine and coastal biological diversity, in particular ecosystem evaluation and assessment (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/7/3, annex II, section A, subsection 2). This document provides also a progress report, including a draft of the guidance under preparation.

50. The guidance being created uses as its basis the guidelines developed during the Expert Meeting on Methods and Guidelines for the Rapid Assessment of Biological Diversity of Inland Water Ecosystems, which was held in Montreal from 2 to 4 December 2002.

### *3 Review by a group of experts*

51. The draft guidance was reviewed by a liaison group that operated electronically through a listserv during February of 2003. The group included representatives from a wide range of organizations or assessments dealing with marine biodiversity issues.

52. Documents UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/8/INF/13 and UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/9/INF/25 provide the results of this work. It was recognized in the document that the list of methods provided was not meant to be comprehensive. Rather, the focus was on selected protocols that can be widely applied and that come with detailed instructions. Increasingly, such protocols are now available on the Internet. Accordingly, the Secretariat posted both the guidance and the methods on its website at ([www.biodiv.org](http://www.biodiv.org)), with the expectation that the list of methods and protocols will be regularly updated.

### *4. Use and application of the results and identification of further gaps*

53. While the specific methods differ, the overall guidance for rapid assessment of marine and coastal biological diversity is almost identical to the guidance developed for inland water ecosystems. Therefore, a marine and coastal-specific annex could be added to the technical document to be published as part of the inland waters programme of work. In addition, the list of methods on the website of the Convention on Biological Diversity will be updated periodically.

54. The UNEP-WCMC undertook a Survey of Global and Regional Marine Environmental Assessments and Related Scientific Activities in January 2003 (<http://www.unep-wcmc.org/marine/GMA/>). This study analysed information on marine environmental assessments carried out on the regional and global levels. Though not strictly focused on rapid assessments, this comprehensive review identified the following thematic and geographical gaps: (i) the high seas and deep/open waters; (ii) the marine environments of developing nations and small island developing States;

and (iii) the interactions between marine and freshwater systems. Planned and existing assessment processes (whether rapid or not) could be encouraged to address the gaps identified in the UNEP-WCMC study.

### III. CONCLUSIONS

#### A. *General assessment of the procedures and methods*

55. The pilot assessments were carried out in a variety of ways and under diverse circumstances. However, in general, they followed the general procedure described in annex I to the note by the Executive Secretary prepared for the seventh meeting of SBSTTA (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/7/3). The detailed process that was followed for each pilot assessment depended, *inter alia*, on the scope and timeframe of the assessment, procedures adopted by collaborating partners, the availability of financial resources and the availability of relevant information.

56. Regarding the procedures and methods for the future assessments of SBSTTA, the steps proposed in section II above and summarized in the annex to this note, essentially reflecting the general procedure described in annex I to document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/7/3, could be considered as a general guide that may be applied flexibly.

57. An important step that SBSTTA may wish to consider is how the Body should consider the results of the assessments before they are forwarded to the Conference of the Parties, whether to

- (a) Note them and recommend them to Conference of the Parties for noting;
- (b) Endorse the full report before submitting it to the Conference of the Parties;
- (c) Endorse only the executive summary before the assessment is submitted to the Conference of the Parties; or
- (d) As suggested in paragraph 10 of the note by the Executive Secretary on the development of methodologies and identification of pilot studies (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/6/9), rely on the endorsement by an AHTEG established to this effect or by another body serving as an assessment panel.

58. In this concluding section, further developments are carried out to determine whether the pilot assessments undertaken to date: (i) responded to the expectations of SBSTTA, i.e. whether they advanced the state of current knowledge on key issues (recommendation VI/5, para. 1) and (ii) can enable SBSTTA to identify or further develop procedures and methods for its future assessments, including how it can participate in scientific assessments initiated by other bodies, and contribute to strengthening human capacities in developing countries when undertaking scientific assessments.

59. The assessment of the status and trends of, and threats to, forest biodiversity provided the basis for the expanded programme of work on forest biodiversity adopted by the Conference of the Parties in decision VI/22. The assessment of the interlinkages between biodiversity and climate change has paved the way to the development of concrete guidance. The assessment of the ecological and socio-economic impacts of invasive alien species on island biodiversity and on inland water ecosystems will be considered when the respective programmes of work are being developed or reviewed. The rapid assessments methods for the biodiversity of inland water ecosystems and marine and coastal biodiversity should play an important role in monitoring the trends in biodiversity, including in the context of the 2010 target.

#### B. *Future assessments relating to scientific, technical and technological matters up to 2010*

60. In decision VII/31, the Conference of the Parties adopted a multi-year programme of work until 2010, including the in-depth review of ongoing work under the thematic areas and cross-cutting issues and progress reports on the implementation of the Strategic Plan, in particular, the 2010 biodiversity target of achieving a significant reduction in the current rate of biodiversity loss at global, regional and

national levels, and relevant Millennium Development Goals. In its decision VII/30, the Conference of the Parties adopted a framework to enhance the evaluation of achievements and progress in the implementation of the Strategic Plan and, in particular, the 2010 biodiversity target. The framework consists of seven focal areas, targets, sub-targets under development, and related indicators contained in annexes I and II to decision VII/30.

61. Accordingly, SBSTTA will prepare the in-depth reviews as follows:

(a) Prior to the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, on: (i) dry and sub-humid lands biodiversity; and (ii) the Global Taxonomy Initiative;

(b) Prior to the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, on (i) agricultural biodiversity; (ii) the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation; (iii) invasive alien species; (iv) forest biodiversity; (v) incentives, and (vi) ecosystem approach; and

(c) Prior to the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, on: (i) inland waters biodiversity; (ii) marine and coastal biodiversity; (iii) sustainable use; (iv) protected areas; (v) mountain biodiversity; and (vi) climate change.

62. These activities will include up-to-date assessments of the status and trends of, and threats to, biodiversity of dry and sub-humid lands, agricultural, forest, inland water, marine and coastal, protected areas, and mountain ecosystems, including, *inter alia*, information on the ecological and socio-economic impacts of invasive alien species and the impact of the implementation of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation; and up-to-date assessments of the interlinkages between biodiversity, climate change and land degradation. In carrying out these assessments, SBSTTA will take into consideration the framework adopted by the Conference of the Parties in its decision VII/30, including the use of indicators adopted within that framework.

### **C. Participation in scientific assessments initiated by other bodies**

63. A large number of ongoing and planned assessments initiated by other bodies are relevant to the Convention. Formal ways have been established for the participation of the Convention in these assessments only in few cases such as the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, in which the Executive Secretary is a Board member, the Chair of SBSTTA and the staff of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity participated as contributing authors or reviewers, and the reports were circulated widely among Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity for peer-review.

64. The following mechanisms for collaboration and participation could be considered:

(a) Full partnership in designing and carrying out the assessment (i.e. assessment following procedures recognized by all partners);

(b) Participation of the Convention (secretariat or Bureau) in an advisory capacity (membership in steering committee) guiding the assessment process;

(c) Participation of representatives of the Convention as members of the assessment team;

(d) The Convention as recipient of information generated through assessments designed and implemented by others.

65. Depending on the nature of the assessment the appropriate mechanism for collaboration and participation must be selected. This should be done in a proactive way. In the case of option (d) it may be useful to consider the preparation, in collaboration with representatives of the Convention, of a biodiversity synthesis report.

### **D. Ways and means to strengthen the assessment capacities of developing countries**

66. The pilot assessments initiated by SBSTTA were not designed to contribute to national capacity development or to provide advice to Parties on the design of scientific assessment and their implementation.

67. For the purpose of strengthening the capacities of developing countries for conducting assessments, it could be useful to collaborate with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations bodies such as the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the United Nations University (UNU) and other relevant organizations. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment has developed innovative ways to combine the conduct of scientific assessments with the consolidation of national capacity development and to enable the incorporation of local, traditional, indigenous and practitioners' knowledge as sources of information. <sup>2/</sup> SBSTTA may wish to draw conclusions on the feasibility and relevance of such an approach for its purposes.

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<sup>2/</sup> Presentation by Walter Reid at the Ministerial Segment of the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Kuala Lumpur, in February 2004.

*Annex*

**STEPS FOR THE CONDUCT OF PILOT ASSESSMENTS INITIATED BY SBSTTA**

<b>Assessment steps</b>	<b>Modalities / Activities</b>
Recognition of assessment need/mandate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Mandate is usually given by the Conference of the Parties;</li> <li>(ii) Needs are identified through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The review of programme of work, e.g. for forest biodiversity, and biodiversity and climate change;</li> <li>• After an initial assessment e.g. for invasive alien species;</li> <li>• During implementation of programmes of work, e.g. rapid assessment methods.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Preparation of background document or the Note by the Executive Secretary	<p>Background documents or detailed outlines drafted by the Executive Secretary with or without assistance from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Consultant/collaborating organization; and / or</li> <li>(ii) Expert meeting.</li> </ul>
Consideration by an AHTEG <sup>3/</sup> established by the Conference of the Parties or SBSTTA or by an expert group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Review of background document or Note by the Executive Secretary</li> <li>(ii) Identification of gaps;</li> <li>(iii) Revision of background document taking into account additional published information..</li> </ul>
Peer-review	<p>Peer-review, if applicable, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Selected reviewers;</li> <li>(ii) Wider peer-review involving Parties, other Governments, SBSTTA focal points, experts from the roster of experts of the Convention on Biological Diversity, organizations and indigenous and local communities; other conventions and their focal points.</li> </ul>
Consideration by SBSTTA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Conclusions on assessment;</li> <li>(ii) Recommendation to the Conference of the Parties;</li> </ul>
Use and application of results (including consideration by the Conference of the Parties) and identification of future gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Utilization of the revised document to develop elements and activities for the relevant programmes of work, and follow-up activities;</li> <li>(ii) Decision by the Conference of the Parties.</li> <li>(iii) Publication of assessment reports in the CBD Technical Series;</li> <li>(iv) Use in other publications, e.g. MA report;</li> <li>(v) Use by Governments and others;</li> <li>(vi) Identification of additional information need, including needs for new assessments.</li> </ul>

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<sup>3/</sup> The cost of a meeting of experts (including 12 experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition) varies between US\$ 40,000 and US\$ 60,000 depending on the venue and participation of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity when meetings are held outside of Montreal.